Drip, Drip
Some showers but clearing later tonight, low near 40. Cloudy tomorrow, high near 60. Details: D-7.

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Bell Takes Steps to Stop Leaks From Korean Bribery Probe

By Jerry Oppenheimer
Washington Star Staff Writer

Atty. Gen. Griffin B. Bell today complained about "grand jury leaks" of erroneous information on the Justice Department's investigation of Korean gifts to congressmen.

At a press conference Bell announced he has scheduled a meeting today with department personnel to express his concern about leaks and to urge investigators not to talk to the press.

"If they're going to leak information from the grand jury," Bell said, apparently in jest, "they should leak accurate information. I'm just going to ask them (department employes) to be careful, that if they feel they have some inalienable right to leak, to be accurate."

Bell also said he has no intention of publicly exonerating any congressmen until after the probe is completed.

"We've charted a course, we're following it and we're not engaged in any form of foot-dragging," Bell said.

NEWS REPORTS giving inaccurate information about the Korean investigation and other federal grand jury inquiries deny "due process" to the people under investigation, Bell said.

But the attorney general said he was "not faulting the press if someone tells you something. I'm not quarreling with the media." However, he noted that in one recent week he saw "five different versions" in newspapers concerning the status of the Korean investigation, and charged that "not a single accurate story has been printed."

Bell said that there were only "about 10 people here (in the department) who know the whole story and about 40 who know only part of it." Bell said he felt that the leaks about the investigation had come from those in the latter group.

ON OTHER topics, Bell said:

• He gave his approval last week to the release of Hanafi Muslim leader Hamaas Abdul Khaalis on his own recognizance as a way of ending the takeover of three downtown buildings where more than 100 hostages were held by members of the Moslem sect.

"I think it's appropriate to negotiate in an effort to release hostages," Bell said. He said he felt that the decision to release Khaalis was "a very minimal action" and was not concerned that it would set a bad example in future cases of this sort.

• He will name an FBI official next week to study the feasibility of making the Drug Enforcement Administration a part of the FBI. He said he has also decided against receiving DEA administrator Peter Bensinger's views on such a merger until the FBI completes its report.

• He intends to try to talk to James Earl Ray, convicted of murdering Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., after the House Assassinations Committee completes its investigation. But Bell said that he has received no indication that Ray would talk to him. The

See BELL, A-10

Justice Department issued a report last month in which it concluded that Ray acted alone in the April 1968 slaying of the black civil rights leader.

IN RESPONSE to a question, Bell said that he did not intend to remain as attorney general for a full four-year term. "I don't care to stay four years," he said. However, Bell declined to state how long he intended to remain in the post. Asked why, he said, "I don't want to go into a lame-duck status today."

The subject was brought up when Bell said that he was having "trouble finding people to stay in the department for four years."

Questions have been raised recently about whether politics was involved in the nomination of Pittsburgh Mayor Peter Flaherty, a strong supporter of President Carter's election campaign, to be the new deputy attorney general. Carter had pledged during his campaign to keep politics out of selections of top Justice Department officials.

Bell, in response to questions about the appointment, said Flaherty was recommended to him by Richard L. Thornburgh, the former head of the criminal division, a Republican, and a native of Pittsburgh.

Bell had appointed Thornburgh as acting deputy attorney general but, "I got a large number of complaints from Democrats in Pennsylvania. They said I was helping him (Thornburgh) run for governor."

The attorney general said he, not the White House, decided to recommend the nomination of Flaherty because "he is a good mayor, a good public administrator and we needed someone with that experience here." But Bell added that he had "no trouble getting him cleared at the White House. He and the President knew each other."